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PROFESSOR ADAM HEINZ AS THE UNFORGOTTEN TEACHER OF SEVERAL GENERATIONS OF LINGUISTS

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Abstract

Adam Heinz (1914–1984) was an academic whose field of study encompassed – to use the term employed by Walter Porzig (1950) – *das Wunder der Sprache* (the wonder that is language). His most extensive work entitled *Dzieje językoznawstwa w zarysie* (An outline of the history of linguistics) has, despite its 36 years, still maintained its popularity amongst linguists. Adam Heinz as one of the most eminent Polish structuralist was to remain critical in relation to both formal and functional structuralism. In subscribing to linguistic autonomy he would quote Wittgenstein's words *Die Grenzen meiner Sprache bedeuten die Grenzen meiner Welt* (The limits of my language means the limits of my world.). His academic output is a long way from the tiresome monotony of immanent structuralism; for he grasped as if en passant the difference between lies (deceit) and Newspeak. Professor Adam Heinz, in referencing painting, unofficially divided linguists into miniaturists, landscapists and abstractionists. He himself was an extraordinary miniaturist and landscapist.

“Departed from us is a Great Academic and Educator of many generations of Polish linguists. The Jagiellonian University has lost in the person of the deceased an eminent professor, while Polish science has suffered an irreparable loss.” – so read a fragment of his obituary. The news of the professor's departure was to leave numb the group of students of the three-year course of study called into being by Adam Heinz in 1981 when he was head of the Department of General Linguistics at the Jagiellonian University. This was a specialist course of study in general linguistics for those students who had already become acquainted with the bases of linguistics as part of their individual philological degree courses. As one of them I had

the pleasure of attending Professor Heinz's classes, then a man of 67, while I was a mere 21. As Józef Reczek has aptly remarked, "the specific nature of the Department of General and Indo-European Linguistics (the absence of its own students as such) meant that A. Heinz was not to have pupils in the traditional understanding of the word. Yet all who attended his lectures were to some degree to remain to a greater or lesser extent under his influence." (Reczek 1985: 4).¹

1. *Das Wunder der Sprache*

Adam Heinz's field of investigation right up until the end of his life was – to use Walter Porzig's term – *das Wunder der Sprache* (*the wonder that is language*), this being "the way in which the consciousness of the transmitter and recipient combine with each other concepts and sounds," that is "the set of social norms on the mutual ordering of psychic content and sound form." (Heinz 1969: 6). The specifics of the miracle that is language is its mediation between thought and reality. Consequently, it becomes clear why Professor Heinz started his classes in linguistics from Ogden and Richards' semantic triangle, exploring the "gulf of meaning" (Pisarkowa 2000).

Although he attempted during classes with students to tone down his fascination with his field of study (to such a degree that some mistakenly took this to be bordering on the coolness of being in fact aloof), his immense involvement as an academic was betrayed by his accentuating of those words close to him. For he would talk 'o języku i językoznawstwie' (*about language and linguistics*) going against the rule wherein in Polish the stress falls on the penultimate syllable.

In the article *Język i inne dziedziny działalności człowieka* (*Language and other areas of man's activity*) Adam Heinz underlined: "The semiotic concept of culture is the result of the collaboration of philosophers, logicians, psychologists, sociologists and linguists of course, for the crystalising centre was here from the inception language and its sign nature as well as the fact of its intermediacy between thought and reality, something noted already in antiquity." (Heinz 1981: 143). In speech this expresses "what is the most interesting for a humanist: the unique psyche of the individual and society" (Heinz 1981: 151).

Professor Adam Heinz liked to quote Wittgenstein's (2000: 64) well-known words *Die Grenzen meiner Sprache bedeuten die Grenzen meiner Welt* (*The limits of my language means the limits of my world*) as an argument for the limitations of logic and the autonomy of linguistics. This argument is all the more valuable given that these words were uttered by a logician himself, the author of the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*. Already in the first half of the 1980s, during the classes taken at the then Department of General Linguistics at the Jagiellonian University, Adam Heinz drew attention to the need to develop a dictionary comparing logical and linguistic terms.

As befits a linguist Professor Heinz was a polyglot. As a classical philologist he knew Latin and Greek, and the most important Germanic and Romance languages.

¹ All translations are mine – T.S.

Once during classes he expressed regret at having not learnt Arabic, in which consonants fulfil a lexical function while vowels a grammatical one. In turn Adam Heinz was discouraged from learning Chinese because of the opinion expressed by Jan Baudouin de Courtenay that “It is the writing system of the Chinese that constitutes doom for linguistic thought” (Heinz 1978: 17). He also took no interest in artificial languages.

So as opposed to an artificial language serving only and exclusively logic (hence unchanged in time and space), a natural language serves both logic and the psyche, i.e. it has to convey a content that is simultaneously of an objective and subjective nature (hence its diversity in space and time). Hence within this scope it is an instrument that is exceptionally elastic and precise, as it is well known to writers and poets; here no artificial language can compare (see the difficulties in machine translation). Bearing this fact in mind one of the greatest Swiss linguists W. Porzig entitled his work on language published in 1950 *Das Wunder der Sprache* (*The wonder that is language*) (Heinz 1988: 10).

Adam Heinz’s fascination with natural languages and language in general was to push to the background languages like Esperanto, although this was of top interest for others including the mathematician and Esperantologist René de Saussure, the brother of Ferdinand.

2. *Quot homines tot sententiae*

Often during his lectures on linguistics Professor Heinz would quote the words of Terence (Publius Terentius Afer) from 2175 years back: *Quot homines tot sententiae* (*there are as many opinions as there are people*). This sentence he cited being one of the most eminent Polish historians of linguistics. These words referred, refer and – I am afraid – will refer to the situation within linguistics and more widely within the humanities as a whole. The reason for such a state of affairs are manifold, though the most important of them Adam Heinz was to express in the following way: “Only the psyche of the speaker and listener is able to bring to the fore a certain characteristic trait for a given thing and with the same remove it to the shadows, yet these are merely relocations within the framework of the whole sum.” (Heinz 1988: 263). Linguists who research language concentrate out of necessity on a single problem matter, passing over others or pushing them back out of sight. Discrepancies in the choice of dominant result in the unavoidable situation coined in the phrase “there are as many opinions as there are people.”

In the light of hitherto deliberations the designation *structuralist reductionism* used by critics of structuralism is in essence a sociotechnical means, a suggestion that there exists some non-reductionist theory of language identified with the set of views professed by a given critic. The demystification of the non-reductionist theory was achieved by the theoretical physicist Jakov Frenkel, emphasising: “A good theory of complex systems should present merely a good ‘caricature’ of the said systems,

exaggerating those of its properties which are the most typical as well as ignoring all the other – unimportant – properties.” (Barchudarov 1975: 7).

Besides individual preferences, an important role is played by snobbism and changing fashion. This is aptly captured by Antoine Meillet (1921: viii): *Chaque siècle a la grammaire de sa philosophie* (each age has a grammar of its own philosophy), or, in other words, the grammar in every age reflects the philosophy of a given century. Here it follows to add that the twentieth century now passed abounded in philosophical concepts which to a lesser or greater degree influenced linguistics, amongst them there appeared postmodernism. Terms of this type were until recently overused due to their universality, which in turn aroused anxiety in some.

Professor Adam Heinz underlined during classes that the popularity of some theory or other or some linguistic concept was often decided on not by content based factors but by the magic of a foreign sounding surname. Slavic diacritic marks do not help.

At present one may observe amongst linguists, particularly the organisers of conferences, a specific vogue for two words: *method* and *methodology*. This may be interpreted as a manifestation of a methodological crisis. Helpful would be here the advice given by Adam Heinz, on how to overcome not the first nor the last crisis in theoretical linguistics.

Therefore there arises the question as to whether one can expect the abandoning of these increasingly theoretical and often fairly idle solutions? The future will show us. One thing is for sure though; that in the way all turnabouts and progress within the field of theoretical research were always the consequence of the broadening and deepening of first and foremost material research, the guiding of the researcher's efforts in this direction, for only intensive material research is able to guarantee the effectiveness of theories. (Heinz 1978: 475).

Professor Adam Heinz, in conducting classes based on a reading of Jerzy Kuryłowicz's text *Derywacja leksykalna a derywacja syntaktyczna. Przyczynek do teorii części mowy* (Lexical derivation and syntactic derivation. A contribution to the theory of parts of speech), drew attention to the fact that in the very first paragraph the translator had made the mistake of identifying function with value: “between the lexical value of a given part of speech and its syntactical functions there exists a certain link.” (Kuryłowicz 1979: 148). As we know the term value (*valeur*) has within the work of de Saussure (1991: 103–104) another meaning. It turns out that the poetics of a literary translation should differ from the poetics of a translation of an academic work. The translator as a stylist presumably wanted to avoid a dual repetition of the word *function* in a single sentence. She used therefore a substitute, one which was to turn out to be rather unfortunate. Being sensitive to an appropriate choice of words and making use of terms, the Professor pointed to the fundamental reason for misunderstanding amongst linguists. The manifestation of this said care, the experiencing of a need to “specify as well as making precise basic linguistic concepts through the formulation of their definitions on the basis of the *opinio communis* existing amongst linguists” (Gołąb, Heinz, Polański 1970: 7) is the widely known *Słownik terminów językoznawczych* (A dictionary of linguistic terms) (Gołąb, Heinz,

Polański 1970) edited by Adam Heinz and Tadeusz Milewski. It is characteristic that this dictionary was to appear only five years after it was written. It is therefore close to being 50 years old; yet, despite the flow of time, it is still recommended as the fundamental work in the university field of *An introduction to linguistics* as an academic subject and this is a result of its accessibility in description. Typically in this dictionary the currently fashionable terms *method* and *methodology* do not appear as separate entry headwords.

Professor Adam Heinz is considered to be “one of the most eminent of Polish structuralists” (Bednarczyk 1988: 418). His academic output is a far cry from the tiresome monotony of immanent structuralism thanks to the fact that he creatively approached “the proposed methods and created his own tools characterised as was he by culture, research elegance, dexterity, the ability for abstraction and synthesis as well as viewing the entirety of a given phenomenon” (Rokoszowa 1986: 7).

Adam Heinz’s interests covered both *langue*, and *parole*. It was he, and not the philosophers pointlessly racking their brains or the writers gifted with intuition and precision in word, who “as if in passing, without a trace of research exertion” (Rokoszowa 1986: 12) solved the problem of the difference between Newspeak and lies (deceit):

As is known people have always lied, lie and will lie. Here however the matter concerns something different (new) and namely: 1° in a lie the words mean the same it is only the sentences that are false, while in Newspeak the reverse is the case, it is firstly the words that are false and only then as a consequence the sentences, 2° lying is an individual, accidental phenomenon while Newspeak is a united regular system in which words of the opposite meaning were handed down from talk (*parole*) to language (*langue*), 3° lying (deceit) discredits only the speaker and not the language. while Newspeak discredits the credibility of the language itself, and therefore its informative functions and consequently obviously the sender (transmitter). (Heinz 1985: 15).

3. *Shake well before use*

According to an anecdote quoted by Adam Heinz, Jerzy Kuryłowicz, when asked by a young linguist about his views on a certain theory which at the time was taking off replied: “Shake well before use.” He therefore proposed moderation and caution in methodology, advising against an uncritical acceptance of everything that is in vogue.

Adam Heinz was directed in his research work by such a principle. Although structuralism was close to him he did not spare critical remarks directed towards both American and European structuralism, proof of which was the article *Podstawowe założenia współczesnego językoznawstwa ogólnego* (*Fundamental principles of contemporary general linguistics*) (Heinz 1988), written on the sixtieth anniversary of the appearance of Ferdinand de Saussure’s work. Some of the charges he formulated close on fifty years ago may be levelled at linguistics of the beginning

of the 21st century: “the authors of linguistic works commonly replace traditional linguistic terms, ones precisely stated, being themselves the work of many generations of researchers, with their new equivalents: ones often ad hoc created by the representatives of alien sciences without there actually being any need for the said, and often this simply out of a desire to display modernity (or being totally under the influence of fashion or snobbism)” (Heinz 1988: 76).

4. Semantics as the core of linguistics

The role of semantics in linguistics was forcefully put by Adam Heinz (1978: 475) “As is known the central core of linguistics is semantics, constituting simultaneously a bridge in the direction of philosophy, logic, psychology etc.” Semantic matters were to remain close to Adam Heinz. Characteristically his first publication *Związek wypowiedzeniowy wprost i nie wprost* (*The direct and indirect utterance relationship*) of 1954 concerned metaphor and metonymy. Their intellectual basis was considered by Heinz to be the principle of psychological parity (i.e. similarity) and material or intellectual contiguity (Heinz 1988: 271).

Connected with semantic questions were those of the autonomy of linguistics and the fear that it may be nothing more than an extension or offshoot of other academic disciplines. Chiefly psychology and logic (Heinz 1988: 48). If Professor Heinz had lived to see our day he would have surely drawn attention to the fact that the present state of affairs within linguistics recalls that of the 19th century in relation to psychologism as the basis for the interpretation of linguistic phenomena. A manifestation of this is the curricular basis in force in Poland within philology degrees. Logic has been driven out while its place has been taken by the compulsive subject of psycholinguistics. The popularity of psychologism results from not only eternal human curiosity, what lies in someone’s heart, but equally in a way from the removal of mathematics as a compulsory component in the Polish school leaving certificate examination, a situation that has only recently been amended and restored.

For certain Professor Adam Heinz would have proposed a happy medium, a flexible solution involving the maintaining of moderation. An excessive fascination with other sciences may threaten the autonomy of linguistics, not that this means, however, that inspiration drawn from other disciplines should or can be avoided.

5. Miniaturists, landscapists and abstractionists

“Professor Adam Heinz in his private conversations divided linguists into miniaturists, landscapists and abstractionists” (Wilkoń 1991: 89). The key to understanding this unofficial typology can be found in my opinion in the article *Język a inne dziedziny działalności człowieka* (*Language and other fields of human activity*). The Professor crucially analysed in it abstract art:

As in all creativity as in art there exist works of varied ranking. On the one hand these are great works of music, painting, sculpture, proving the high artistic standing of their creators, who are able – being instilled by talent and honed intuition – to comply with the fundamental principles of structuralism yet simultaneously preserve their own artistically effective proportions between theory and practice. Their works new in form and content will last for certain the test of time and will testify to their epoch. On the other hand, there exists within abstract art a worryingly large number of unsuccessful and weak works, whose value although at present recognised is from a greater distance presumably only ephemeral. The fault lies not only in the people, but also within the theory. Here things concern the fact that structuralism severed in its programme sense from substance (= objective reality) resulted involuntarily within some weak individuals, and here as equally in linguistics as in artistic creation, in a dangerous loosening of the traditionally enforced academic and artistic rigours; while the discrediting or hindering of objective control encourages the cutting of corners and self-deception. All too easily can superficial depth (while in reality corner cutting) be identified with non-communicativeness and the reverse: communicativeness with superficiality. The factor favourable for these tendencies is equally the vogue that currently reigns within science and art. (Heinz 1988: 24).

For sure Adam Heinz was not an “abstractionist”, he was, however, an eminent “miniaturist” and “landscapist”. As a landscapist – and not any old landscapist – he was able to sketch a history of linguistics which has been unequalled in Poland for 36 years. Remaining with the painting metaphor one may say – or so it seems – that no one wielded a “brush” like he did. His works, despite the passing of the years, have not lost their worth either as a page from the history of linguistics, or first and foremost as a source of inspiration for contemporary researchers.

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